

Department of Labor & Industries' Vocational Evaluation Guidelines Guidelines for Vocational Testing of Workers

Why do we need guidelines about vocational testing?

Historically, the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) relied heavily on the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) to assess the training potential of many workers. Now that the Federal Department of Labor has stopped publishing the GATB, L&I needs to consider vocational testing alternatives. L&I also recognizes the importance of clearly communicating our needs and expectations for vocational testing.

Our goal for these guidelines is to improve consistency between L&I staff and private vocational providers in the use and interpretation of vocational testing. We've developed these guidelines to help you provide appropriate vocational testing to injured workers.

1. Will L&I continue to use the GATB as the main measure of aptitudes?

No.

The US Department of Labor is no longer publishing the GATB. The Washington State Department of Employment Security has stopped registering people to administer or interpret the GATB.

2. Can we still use the GATB?

It depends.

Do not bill the department for GATB testing unless a copy of *current* GATB certification is included with the testing report. In addition, according to the 2-7-02 memos by Ramona S. Dahl, Employment Security, GATB results can only be used as one of multiple measures--it shouldn't be used as the sole predictor of vocational potential.

L&I will still use GATB results that are already on file. That means that if you have a case in which the worker previously received GATB testing, you can consider those testing results when addressing the worker's tested aptitudes. Of course, you'll need to decide if the GATB was an appropriate test for the worker.

In addition, you'll need to determine if the results are a valid measure of the worker's aptitudes.

3. Will L&I rely on the O*NET Ability Profiler as a replacement for the GATB?

No.

The Ability Profiler isn't designed for deciding whether or not a worker has the aptitudes for specific retraining goals. The Ability Profiler can be used for general career exploration, counseling, and basic planning purposes. But it's not designed or validated to predict potential to learn specific vocations. Nor is the Ability Profiler designed for making decisions about what training an injured worker will receive.

4. Who should administer and interpret vocational testing?

Providers who perform vocational testing must be qualified and certified, where necessary, to administer all testing instruments they use.

As the assigned vocational rehabilitation counselor (VRC), you have the responsibility to make sure the worker receives the right vocational testing. This means you will need to identify who can most appropriately provide any necessary testing.

If your vocational firm doesn't have anyone qualified to administer the necessary type of testing, you'll need to find a professional with the appropriate expertise.

A vocational tester needs skills in:

- Selecting the right tests for a worker
- Making objective observations
- Understanding and using the right norms
- Interpreting test results

A vocational tester also needs to be a credible witness at the Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals if called to testify.

Note:

We are using the term **vocational tester** in these guidelines because it can apply to VRCs who provide vocational testing but may not think of themselves as a vocational evaluator, test administrator, or psychometrist.

5. What professional ethics apply to vocational testing for our workers?

The three vocational certifications recognized by L&I each have their own code of ethics. In addition, the certification for Vocational tester (CVE) includes a specific code of ethics for vocational testing.

Note:

Make sure you're qualified to give any testing you administer. If you lack the necessary skills, refer the worker to someone with the right expertise.

Make sure that any vocational testing that your clientele receives is professional and ethical. Even if you don't have one of the required certifications, it's your responsibility to act according to whatever code of ethics applies to the testing situation.

Resource: You can read the [Responsibilities of Users of Standardized Tests Statement \(RUST\)](#) for an overview of ethical practices in vocational testing:

6. Does a vocational tester need a specific reason(s) or an evaluation plan for each worker?

Yes.

You need to identify specific reasons for vocational testing. And yes, the vocational tester needs to complete an evaluation plan for each worker.

The vocational tester needs information about the following types of issues:

- Worker's educational and work history
- Length of time out of school
- What you're trying to learn or document from the vocational testing
- Physical abilities/limitations
- English as a Second Language
- Hearing or visual impairments
- Cognitive impairments
- Learning disabilities

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When referring to a vocational tester, discuss the situation if you're unclear about what information you need from the testing. The vocational tester can help you identify the information you need.

The vocational tester should write an evaluation plan for each worker to know which tests to use and why they're being used.

Note: You can use the [Sample Format](#) to develop a vocational evaluation plan.

It's unnecessary to send copies of vocational evaluation plans to L&I. However, whoever gives the vocational testing needs to keep the evaluation plans in their worker files. The vocational tester needs documentation to explain why a worker received specific vocational test(s).

7. When might an IQ (intelligence quotient) test be useful?

Usually, there's no need for IQ testing when identifying vocational strengths and limitations of most workers in plan development. In fact, inappropriately communicating IQ scores can harm workers.

However, IQ testing can be necessary for certain conditions, such as:

- Learning disabilities
- Cognitive deficits
- Developmental disabilities
- Possible cognitive problems that may keep the worker from benefiting from vocational services (in some forensic cases)
- Head injuries

Note: A neuropsychologist would include IQ testing as part of a neuropsychological evaluation for a worker with cognitive problems.

In general, vocational testing usually doesn't need to include IQ testing if the worker has no problems related to cognitive functioning.

8. Does the department authorize vocational testing for a worker in *Early Intervention (EI)*?

No.

The department doesn't authorize vocational evaluation codes during Early Intervention. For any Self-Insured case, you'll need to discuss this issue with the self-insured employer representative.

9. Does the department authorize vocational testing for a worker during the *Ability to Work Assessment* phase?

The worker may need vocational testing if it's unclear whether rehabilitation services are likely to enable the worker to become employable at gainful employment.

An assessment of "likely to benefit" should comprise more than just one testing instrument. For example, one brief test such as the WRAT may not adequately measure a worker's academic skills.

We suggest conducting **comprehensive** vocational testing when you're addressing a worker's likelihood to benefit from vocational services. Comprehensive testing will more strongly support the resulting vocational determination.

If the vocational tester finds significant discrepancies among test results, the tester needs to provide an expert analysis to help L&I reasonably adjudicate the claim.

Note: Do **not** use vocational testing when you're assessing transferable skills in the general labor market.

10. Do all *Plan Development* workers need vocational testing?

No.

If a worker has well documented tested or demonstrated aptitudes, you may not need aptitude testing.

If you receive a case in which the worker has already received vocational testing, you'll need to determine if the prior testing is useable.

Examples:

If the worker previously received interest testing but now you need to know the worker's skills in arithmetic and reading, you'll probably need to get achievement testing.

Or if prior aptitude testing shows aptitude scores below the worker's demonstrated aptitudes, you may need to consider additional testing.

Note:

It's important to get appropriate **achievement** testing for workers considering training or jobs that require reading, writing, spelling, or math skills--If you don't have documentation of those skills, you should get them tested. Check with local Community Colleges and Adult Basic Education programs to find out if they offer achievement testing appropriate for your clientele.

11. Might a worker in *Plan Implementation* ever receive vocational testing?

The department doesn't authorize vocational evaluation codes during Plan Implementation.

For any Self-Insured case, you'll need to discuss this issue with the self-insured employer representative.

12. Does a worker need vocational testing during a *Forensic* referral?

It's your responsibility, as the assigned VRC to determine what services will address the forensic referral question(s). If you don't feel qualified to conduct comprehensive vocational testing, you may need to discuss possible testing needs with a vocational tester.

Important: We suggest conducting **comprehensive** vocational testing when you're addressing a worker's likelihood to benefit from vocational services. Comprehensive testing will provide more information to support the resulting vocational determination.

If the vocational tester finds significant discrepancies among test results, the tester needs to present an expert analysis to help L&I reasonably adjudicate the claim.

13. Should I use vocational testing for a worker who may not be likely to benefit from vocational services?

You'll need to address each situation individually. You might discover that a worker isn't likely to return to work or benefit from vocational services during AWA, plan development, or during a forensic evaluation. If this happens, you'll need to determine whether or not vocational testing can help address the referral.

The testing to address a worker's likelihood to benefit is similar to the type of testing that might be needed in a forensic referral.

14. When might a worker need additional vocational testing?

A worker may need additional vocational testing if the initial testing fails to provide the information you need.

Examples:

The worker completed simple academic testing. The vocational tester found that the worker's scores are so low that work sample testing may be the best way to assess vocational potential.

Or the worker may test below average on an aptitude needed for a proposed retraining goal. The worker may benefit from more vocational testing to better measure that aptitude, especially if the initial score isn't in line with the worker's demonstrated aptitudes.

Workers with certain issues, such as learning disabilities, cognitive deficits, or developmental disabilities, may benefit from a more hands-on approach to vocational testing. Approaches such as work samples or workstations can sometimes provide a more realistic picture of the worker's true functioning or potential to learn new skills.

15. What factors need to be considered when reviewing the results of vocational testing?

You'll need to determine if the vocational testing provides the information to answer your questions. In addition, make sure the vocational testing report includes the following elements:

- The worker's work history
- A description of anything that might have influenced the test results, including:
 - Physical
 - Cognitive
 - Psychological functioning
- A list of tests used with a brief description of each one
- Interpretation of the worker's testing results

Note:

Pension adjudicators and VDRO reviewers look for information about a worker's work history throughout a claim file. For example, a work history reported in a pain clinic report, PCE, or vocational testing report may include jobs not reported to the VRC.

The vocational testing report should include a reader-friendly summary that analyzes the results in an easy to understand way, including:

- A response to the referral question(s)
- Recommendations for vocational planning, if appropriate
- Description of the worker's assets and limitations
- Practical recommendations for further assessment, if needed

Make sure that vocational testing reports on any of your assigned workers do **not** include:

- Raw scores
- Answer sheets
- Copies of actual tests
- Extensive computerized printouts

Note: You can use the [Sample Format for Vocational Testing Report](#) with instructions as a template.

16. What if vocational test results don't match the worker's demonstrated abilities?

You need to explain what factors may have contributed to the low-test scores. Examples of factors that can interfere with test performance include:

- Impact of the industrial injury
- Impact of other unaccepted or denied conditions
- Questionable effort during testing
- Pain behaviors
- Test anxiety

In addition, as the assigned VRC, you should address any recommendations or concerns resulting from vocational testing. The worker may need further vocational testing to clarify actual abilities, skills, or interests.

17. What do I need to know about vocational testing for workers with a native language other than English?

Workers who have English as a second language (ESL) may still **think** in their native language. This means that they may have to mentally translate their language to English, which can put them at a big disadvantage when taking timed tests that involve verbal skills. This means the test results may be invalid and not useful.

In addition, workers with different cultural backgrounds, such as Native Americans from reservations, may use approaches to testing that puts them at a distinct disadvantage. For instance, a worker may try to get each answer correct by reasoning it out instead of making quick choices on highly timed tests. This could result in invalid results.

There's no simple answer for getting valid, useful test results for workers with ESL or from different cultural backgrounds. The best suggestions would be:

- Make sure you identify which workers have ESL or a different cultural background
- Try to find a vocational tester who is fluent in the worker's native language
- If you de-standardize a test, you can't use the standard norms
- If you use an interpreter for vocational testing, make sure the interpreter has skills in giving pertinent objective observations and conversational information
- Workers with ESL or different cultural backgrounds may benefit from hands-on testing such as work samples or work stations

18. What are the best aptitude, interest, and achievement tests for our worker population?

You'll need to apply your professional judgment. If you don't know what tests would best suited to the worker, discuss the situation with a more experienced vocational tester.

The Internet has some free or low cost interest and temperament testing available. See the **Resources List** for ideas of where to look on the Internet. If you use on-line testing, make sure it's appropriate for the worker. You'll also need to make sure the worker understands the instructions and feels comfortable with this type of testing format.

L&I doesn't want to limit the testing options for you and the workers. Many vocational tests exist and you're encouraged to find the ones that best suit the worker and the situation. Some tests will suit some workers but not others. We don't want anyone using a cookie-cutter approach to vocational testing.

19. How do I find out the amount of money available for testing my workers?

For State Fund workers, look at the RCRP screen when you are logged in as a vocational provider in the LVOC system to find out if the department has previously paid for vocational testing under that claim. You have the responsibility to make sure there's enough money available for testing.

It's your responsibility to make sure that the department has authorized vocational evaluation services.

If you have a worker with a Self-Insured claim, you'll need to follow whatever procedure the employer representative prefers for setting up vocational testing when needed.

Vocational Testing Resources

Following is a list of sources for additional information regarding vocational evaluation. The sources provide information regarding testing techniques as well as specific tests.

- The department does not endorse any of the information contained in any of the resources.
- The department does not guarantee the usability of any website.
- This list is not intended to be all-inclusive.

Ethics

[Responsibilities of Users of Standardized Tests \(RUST\)](#)

prepared by the Association for Assessment in Counseling as section of the American Association of Counseling. This document is intended to promote the accurate, fair and responsible use of standardized tests by the counseling and education communities.

[Code of Ethics from the Commission on Certification of Work Adjustment and Vocational Evaluation Specialist](#)

[American Board of Vocational Experts Code of Ethics](#)

[Code of Ethics for Certified Disability Management Specialist](#)

[Code of Professional Ethic for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors](#)

Vocational Test Information

Note:

“Tests and Test Use in Vocational Evaluation” published by Stout University of Wisconsin in 1996. It contains a description of 70 tests that may be of use for vocational evaluation. It also contains guidelines for selecting and administering tests.

[Buros Institute](#) provides tests reviews and gives information about tests exactly as it appears in the Mental Measurements Yearbook series. Promises free information on almost 4,000 commercially available tests. You can also purchase more in-depth reviews.

[America’s Career InfoNet](#) includes descriptions of a wide variety of tests. It includes some on line tests. Some may require purchase.

[Career One Stop](#) contains links to other career selection resources including sites with information regarding assessment.

[Career One Stop testing and Assessment Center](#) includes testing and assessment information for employers and job seekers with a link to The Mental Measurements Yearbook Test Reviews online.

[What Color's Your Parachute](#) is a companion to the book of the same name and helps job seekers to assess options.

Related Agencies

[Employment Security Department](#) contains links to a variety of information for job search including O'net Interest Profiler and Work Importance Locator Tool.

[DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation](#) gives information regarding how to contact this department regarding their use of assessments.

Schools

[Western Washington University Rehabilitation Counseling Program](#)

[Southern Illinois University Rehabilitation Institution](#)

[University of Wisconsin at Stout Rehabilitation Institute](#)

[University of Arizona](#)

[University of Northern Colorado Regional VIII RCEP](#)
(Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs)